Victor Emmanuel, Emancipator

A Sermon
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"To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."-Isaiah 42:7.

ON A FORMER occasion we contemplated the unconverted man as being bound by the cords of his sins. It was a very solemn and sorrowful topic. I trust it humbled us all, and made those of us whom the Son has made free, feel renewed gratitude for the glorious liberty of the children of God. Sad was the spectacle of the dungeon and the fetters, and the felon bound therewith, a man, a brother, the image of ourselves. It is a great relief to turn to another subject akin to that, but full of cheerfulness and joy. We showed you the prisoner: we have now to speak of him who came to set the prisoners free. We decribed the captive's cords and bonds; we have now to tell you of him whose mighty touch liberates the bond-slaves, and signs the Magna Carta of eternal emancipation. The case of manhood bound like Prometheus to the rock, and preyed upon by the vulture of hell, appeared utterly hopeless, and the more so because the prisoner was his own fetter, and disdained to be free. After all that has been done for man, by the tenderness of God, the simplicity of the gospel, and the clear and plain command; yes, and after all the thunders of threatening, followed by the wooing notes of mercy, the captive continues still the willing slave of sin, and his liberation appears utterly hopeless. But things impossible with men are possible with God, and where human agency fails, divine agency delights to illustrate its own extraordinary energy. We gladly survey at this time the effectual operations of Jesus the Savior, the true Victor Emmanuel, who comes to set men free from the bondage of their sins, to whose name be honor and glory world without end.

I. Looking at the first verses of this chapter, we shall consider WHO IT IS THAT SENDS JESUS CHRIST TO ACCOMPLISH THE LIBERATION OF THE SONS OF MEN, because much will depend upon the liberator's credentials, the authority by which he is warranted, and the power by which he is backed.

We sing for joy of heart as we see that the Infinite God himself commissioned the Lord Jesus to be the deliverer of men; and he did this, first, *in his capacity as Creator.* Read the fifth verse, and behold the great author of the Redeemer's commission: "Thus saith Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it." He, then, who spared not his own Son, but sent him forth on the embassage of love, is Jehovah, who has made the heavens a pavilion of azure, gilded with

the sun, and bedecked with stars; the self-same all-sustaining One who bears up the pillars of the universe, and impels the earth in its majestic circuit. He who gave its lustre to every precious stone from the mine, its life to every blade of grass, its fruit to every tree, its motion to every beast and winged fowl—for all these may be said to come out of the earth; he it is who sent the Incarnate God to open the two-leaved gates, and cut the bars of iron asunder, that the slaves of Satan might escape from the thraldom of their sins. Jesus, the Son of God, comes armed with the power of the Creator himself. Rejoice, then, ye that are lost, for surely the power which spake all things out of nothing, can new create you, though there be nought of good within you to aid the godlike work. Rejoice, ye that are marred and broken, like vessels spoiled upon the potter's wheel, your great Creator puts his hand a second time to the work, and resolves to form you for himself that you may show forth his praise. He by whom you were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, is able by his mysterious working to create in you a new heart, and infuse into you a right spirit. Is there not hope for the dark chaos of your fallen nature, and that heart of yours which is now without form and void? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is there any restraint of his power? It is true your fellow-creatures, be they exalted never so highly by office or character, cannot regenerate you, the very idea is blasphemy against the prerogative of him who alone can create or destroy; but where the will of man, and blood, and birth all fail, the Spirit of the Lord achieves the victory. Thus saith the Lord, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." What has John written in the book of his vision? Is it not to the same purpose? He that sat upon the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new." He who made the light can open your eyes. He who bade the rivers flow, can open springs of penitence within your souls. He who clothed the earth with verdure, can make your barren minds fruitful to his praise. If he piled yon Alpine summits, balanced the clouds which float about them, and formed the valleys which laugh at their feet, he can yet create within the little world of man thoughts that aspire to heaven, desires that ascend to the realms of purity, and good works which are the fair products of his Spirit. Has the Creator sent forth a liberator to captive men? Then is there hope indeed!

He who sent forth the Lord Jesus as his Elect One to restore our fallen race, also describes himself as *the life giver;* for returning to the fifth verse of the chapter before us, we read, "He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein!" The Lord creates animal life: he puts breath into the nostrils of men and beasts; he gives also mental life—the life which thinks, imagines, doubts, fears, understands, desires. All life comes from the central fountain of self-existence in the great I Am, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. This Eternal One, who has life in himself, has sent forth his Son to give life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and he has girded him with his own power,

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." It is by the word of Jesus that the dead shall rise, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Arrayed in such life-giving power no case of human corruption can be beyond the Redeemer's skill even those who rot, like Lazarus, shall come forth when he calls them, and the bonds of death and hell shall be loosed. Thus saith the Lord of life: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." The vision of Ezekiel's valley has become a fact since Jesus has appeared; and it is no marvel that it should be so, since the Eternal and Everliving God has sent him. He can breathe the Holy Spirit into the dead soul, and give the heart that palpitates with penitence, and leaps with desires after God. He can give eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. All that belongs to life he can bestow—the hearing ear, the speaking tongue, the grasping hand. The great obstacle in his way is spiritual death, and as with a word he can remove it, the salvation of man is no longer a difficulty. Rejoice, ye heavens; and be glad, O earth; for among the graves of our sins, and into the very charnel-house of our corruption, the Quickener has descended, and is quickening whomsoever he will.

Nor is this all for he who sent the Redeemer is represented in the sixth verse as *the faithful God.* "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness;" that is to say, the God who sends Christ the Savior is not one who plays with words, and having given a promise to-day, retracts it to-morrow. "He is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." Immutable are his promises and purposes, for they are founded in righteousness. He who has commissioned his chosen messenger is not unrighteous to forget his word. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall it not come to pass? Hence, thy dear brethren, every gospel promise has the stamp of the divine righteousness upon it, that you may know it to be true. Jesus assures us that, if we believe in him, we shall be delivered. God, who cannot lie, sets his seal to the promise. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," is not only the declaration of Christ, but God himself confirms it. Then, "Amen, so let it be!" The vilest sinner that believeth shall find life and pardon, acceptance and blessedness in Christ Jesus. Thou hast not to deal, O trembler, with one who will interpret his promise at a lower point than thou dost understand it at; but thou hast to deal with One who means more than words can express, whose thoughts are as high above your thoughts, even when enlightened by his Word, as the heavens are above the earth. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He who utters these words is the Lord, the faithful Promiser, who has sent forth Christ, not to deceive you with specious presences, but in very deed and truth to bring abundance of grace to those who trust him.

Reading further in the same verse, you will perceive that the everblessed sender of the Lord Jesus is *omnipotent,* for is it not added, "And will hold thine hand, and will keep thee"? By which is meant that God will give to the Mediator all his power. Christ is the power of God. Omnipotence dwells in him who once was slain, but now ever liveth, and he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. In the gospel of Christ there is a putting forth of divine power as manifest as in the creation and in the upholding of the world. Here is our comfort under all the assaults with which the Christian faith is threatened, and under all the disappointments which the Christian church has hitherto undergone; Emmanuel, God with us, is still our strength. We are persuaded that the ultimate victory of the cross is absolutely certain, for "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The creation was a work of omnipotence, and yet it was not accomplished all at once. The Lord could, if he had so willed it, have fashioned this habitable globe in one second of time, and have furnished all its chambers by a single word of his mouth. Instead of this, we have reason to believe that he lingered in the first formation of it, in the beginning, when he created the heavens and the earth; and arranged and disarranged it many times before he came to the final constitution of it in the first six days of time, wherein he modeled it to be a fit abode for man. Even then when he came to the final work, not in one day did he build up chaos into the beautiful house of humanity. Not at first did the firmament divide the waters, or the dry land appear above the seas. Not till the third day did the earth bring forth grass and the herb yielding seed, nor did sun and moon divide the empire of day and night till the fourth day had dawned; while the fowl that fly in the open firmament of heaven, and the living creatures that move in the waters, owned a yet later birth. Everything was gradual. Step by step the Maker advanced, get was there never anything less than omnipotence in every step of his progress. So, my brethren, the Lord might as easily have converted the whole world to Christ on the day of Pentecost as not, but not so had his decrees appointed. A step was taken in apostolic times, and the light shone forth in darkness; further on, the great division between the heavenly and the earthly became marked and clear, and the church rose like the dry land above the seas of sin, while the plants of the Lord's right-hand planting brought forth their seed and their fruit. Even now the appointed lights make glad the sky, and the time hastens on when the Lord shall more evidently bless his living ones, and say, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth;" but all is done by degrees as he appoints. Our impatience would fain stand at the Eternal elbow, and say, "Master, complete thy work, and let our eyes behold the Second Adam in a world restored into a second Eden." But he tarries for awhile, and waits while his great appointed evenings and mornings fill up his week of glorious work. He delights in this noblest labor of his hands, and is not as the hireling who earnestly desireth the shadow that his toilsome task may be ended. He lingers lovingly, and his long suffering is salvation. The Lord's decrees tarry not so long but what in the divine reckoning, and accord-

ing to the Lord's own estimate, the end will come quickly, but to the presumptuous who dare to say, "where is the promise of his coming?" he seems to linger long. How blessed will be the grand finale of redemption work; then shall the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy. The seventh day of redemption shall eclipse the Sabbath of nature, even as the new heavens and the new earth shall outshine the former: a river purer than Hiddekel shall water the new Eden, the tree of life of richer fruit shall grow in the midst of the garden, and then shall be fulfilled the saying which is written, "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." As we read the promise, "I will hold thine hand, and will keep thee," we see the certainty that the Savior girt with the allsufficiency of divine strength, will accomplish the work of human salvation. Be of good cheer, O children of God, and comfort yourselves with the belief, "that he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." His church has no reason for fear, but every ground of confidence as to her future. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

"Fear not, though many a mighty foe
Against thy walls advance;
Jehovah's arm will lay them low
For thy deliverance.
Oh, take him at his royal word
That word which cannot lie
Thy shield and sword is Israel's Lord,
Almighty sovereignty."

I know you will tell me, "most men say that the world will end in a few years; is it not written that the Bridegroom cometh quickly?" Yes, but remember that eighteen hundred years ago it was written that he would come quickly, and there have been prophets in all ages who have concluded from this that the end was near, while many believers have been like the Thessalonians, to whom Paul wrote: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." We have been instructed by certain pretended expositors to expect the time of the end for the last seven years, and yet it is possible that it may not arrive for the next seventy thousand years. Perhaps human history, as yet written, is but the first stanza of a wondrous poem, which shall be unfolded page by page for many an age to come, and it may be possible far more rapturous strains of divine mercy and grace in the conversion of men are yet to be read by angels and glorified spirits. If it be so it will still be true that he comes quickly, for what will time be compared with eternity? Even if the space taken up by

the world's history be not a brief six thousand years, but sixty thousand times six thousand years, yet will it be but as a drop of a bucket compared with the years of the right hand of the Most High, the lifetime of the Ancient of Days. Fight on hopefully, my brethren, and be not distressed with rumors of times and seasons, but believe ye this, that God is, in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Watch daily for the Lord's coming, but yet struggle to advance his empire, for "he shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The Lord has not withdrawn his hand from his "elect, in whom his soul delighteth." He will subdue nations before him, he will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates. With such a deliverer so gloriously upheld, there is no room for fear of failure. Our hope and faith joyfully rest in him to whom the Eternal gives his almightiness wherewith to subdue all things unto himself.

II. We will now advance a little further, the Lord helping us. Having contemplated the glorious One who sent Jesus to the work of man's emancipation, let us, in the second place, consider the SENT ONE HIMSELF.

We have him described in the first verse of this chapter, and the first words which we will select from the description inform us that Jesus is *a chosen one.* "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." God has been pleased to set apart his well-beloved Son to be the Savior of sinners, and in every way he is most suitable. As man he is supremely adapted for the work; no other of woman born was fitted for the enterprise. Born in a peculiar manner, without taint or blemish, he alone of human kind possessed the holy nature needful to make him God's messenger of love. I tried to show just now that God has girded our Lord with his omnipotence, and this ought to lead every sinner to feel that Christ can save him, for what cannot Omnipotence do? We may not talk of impossibilities or even difficulties when we have almightiness before us. No sinner can be difficult to save, no bonds hard to remove, when God, the Almighty One, comes forth to save. Now look at the other side of the picture, and remember that Christ Jesus was the most suitable person in whom the Father could place the fullness of his saving power. In his complex person he is every way adapted to stand as mediator between God and man. He who laid help upon one that is mighty, and exalted one chosen out of the people, was guided by infallible wisdom in his choice. None other was so fit as he; in fact there was no other. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Other door of hope can no man open than that which God has opened in the person of Christ. O sinner, I beseech thee accept what God has wisely chosen. Let God's choice be thy willing choice. At this hour, constrained by the grace of God, say, "If God has chosen the Lord Jesus to be a propitiation for sin, my heart accepts him as the atonement for my sin, feeling that he alone can save me." If thus thou dost elect the Lord's elect One, thou shalt find him precious.

But we are also told in the first verse that the Lord Jesus is *anointed to this work,* as well as a choice one for it. "I have put my Spirit upon him." Now, the Holy Spirit is the greatest of all actors in the world of mind. He it is who can illuminate, persuade, and control the spirits of men. He doeth as he wills with mind, even as in the first creation the Lord wrought as he willed with matter. Now, if Jesus Christ has the fullness of the Holy Spirit resting upon him, it is not supposable that any sinner shall be so desperately enslaved that he cannot set him free. We are about to speak of blind eyes to be opened, but in the light of the Holy Spirit what eye need remain blind? We shall speak of captives to be liberated, but with God's free Spirit to loose him what soul need be bound? Bold men have taught doctrines which have emancipated the minds of their fellows from the slavery of superstition, but the Holy Ghost's teachings deliver minds from bondage of every kind, and make men free before the living God. Trembling sinner, accept Christ as your Savior; God appoints him; God anoints him. Are not these two reasons sufficient to make him acceptable to your soul?

Furthermore, the Redeemer is spoken of as being *gentle and lowly of heart,* which should commend him much to every lowly and contrite spirit. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." We need a Savior who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and Jesus is such. Souls conscious of sin are very tender, and agitated with many fears; to cure a wounded conscience is no fool's work, but fit labor for the most experienced physician. See you, then, how fitted Christ is. He never yet said an unkind word to a soul that desired to find mercy at his hands. In the records of his life you may find him try, but you shall never see him repel, an anxious spirit. When feeble faith could only touch the hem of his garment, yet virtue flowed from him. When the leper said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," it was but poor faith, but that faith saved him. Though you cannot yet believe as you would, yet say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," and he will not reject you. Look at the smoking candle-wick which yields no light, but makes much offensive smoke; yet, perchance, a living fire lingers in it, and therefore the tender Savior will not quench it, but will even fan it to a flame. And that bruised reed, how it mars the music of the pipes; draw it out and break it. So would men do, but not so the sinner's Friend. He makes it perfect yet again, and pours the music of his love through it. O thou who art in thine own esteem utterly worthless, only fit to be thrown away, unfit to live and unfit to die; Jesus Christ, the gentle One, will give thee mercy, if thou seek him, and in giving he will not upbraid thee. O wandering child, Jesus will introduce thee to his Father, who will kiss thee with the kisses of his love, and take off thy rags of sin, and clothe thee with glorious robes of righteousness. Only come thou to him, for he is such an one that he cannot reject thee. "How can I come?" saith one. A prayer will bring thee; an anxious desire will be as a chariot to thee. A trust in him hath brought thee, and Christ is thine, if thou dost now accept him. If thy soul is truly willing to have Christ, Christ hath made thee willing,

and has already begun to set thee free. May these thoughts concerning the great Emancipator cheer thee on to confidence in him.

One point more in this direction. The Christ who has come to save the sons of men is *persevering to the last degree.* "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." Men are unwilling to be saved; they do not desire to be brought out of their prison-houses; but Jesus Christ will not cease to teach, nor cease to seek, nor cease to save, till every one of his elect is redeemed from the ruin of the fall, and until a multitude beyond all count shall surround the Father's throne. I tell thee, soul, if Christ wills to save thee, he will save thee. He will track thy footsteps, wander where thou mayst. If thou shouldest escape time after time, from the arrows of conviction, and plunge again and again into sin, yet will he seek thee out and find thee yet. O delay not, but yield to his power! I pray that he may stretch out his sovereign arm at this moment, and rescue thee from thyself. If thy heart were as adamant, or as the nether millstone, he can dissolve it with a touch. O that the rock-breaking hammer would come down upon thee now! He is mighty to save; may he prove his mightiness in thee!

III. It is time that we expound the text itself, and review THE WORK ITSELF.

According to the text, the Messiah's work of grace is divided into three parts, of which the first is, *to open the blind eyes.* Here is a notable work which brings much glory to our Lord. Man's understanding is perverted from the knowledge of God, from a true sense of sin, from a realisation of divine justice, from a right estimate of salvation. The understanding, which is the eye of the soul, is darkened. But when the anointed Savior comes, he removes the scales of our mental ophthalmia, and in the light of God we see light, and then the sinner is humbled and bowed down, for he perceives his guilt and the justice of God. Moreover, he is filled with alarm, for he sees the bleeding Savior bearing Jehovah's wrath, and rightly judges that in every case sin must receive a recompense of wrath; for if sin laid on Christ was punished, how much more must personal sin involve banishment from the presence of the Most High? The sinner is then made to see that the only way in which sin can be removed is through the expiatory sufferings of a substitute. He is led to see that the atonement avails for him upon his believing. He is led to understand what believing is. He *does* believe; he trusts, and then in trusting he is made to see the completeness of pardon, and the glory of the justification which comes to us by faith in Jesus Christ. You may think that this is an easy thing for men to see, trained in the doctrine of it from their childhood, and hearing it incessantly from the pulpit; but, believe me, simple as it seems to he, no man receives it unless it has been given him from heaven. We may say to each one who has seen all this, "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Many of us heard the gospel from our childhood, but until the Holy Spirit explained to us what it was to be a sinner, and what it was to believe in Jesus, we did not know even the rudiments of the gospel. We were in darkness ourselves, though the light shone round about us; and well might we

be, for our eyes were not opened. When Jesus came we saw it all, and we understood the mystery. Our once blind eyes clearly saw ourselves lost, and Christ suffering instead of us; we believed in him, our sins disappeared, and we were accepted in the Beloved. My dear friend, if thou art seeking rest, I pray the Lord to open thine eyes to see the simplicities of the gospel. One touch of his finger will make thee wise unto salvation. There is no need for thee to study the twenty-one folio volumes of Albertus Magnus, or even the fifty-two volumes of John Calvin, for the whole secret of the gospel lies in these few words, "Believe and live;" yet thou canst not open the casket unless the Lord give thee the secret key. It needs an opened eye to see even through a glass window; the clear witness of the gospel is dark to blind eyes.

The next work of the Messiah, according to the text, is *to bring out the prisoners front the prison.* This, I think, relates to the bondage under which a man lies to his sins. Habits of sin, like iron nets, surround the sinner, and he cannot escape their meshes. The man sins, and imagines that he cannot help sinning. How often do the ungodly tell us that they cannot renounce the world, cannot break off their sins by righteousness, and cannot believe in Jesus? Let all men know that the Savior has come on purpose to remove every bond of sin from the captive, and to set him free from every, chain of evil. I have known men strive against the habit of blasphemy, others against unchaste passions, and many more against a haughty spirit, or an angry temper; and when they have strived manfully but unsuccessfully in their own strength, they have been filled with bitter chagrin that they should have been so betrayed by themselves. When a man believes in Jesus his resolve to become a freeman is to a great extent accomplished at once. Some sins die the moment we believe in Jesus, and trouble us no more; others hang on to us, and die by slow degrees, but they are overcome so as never again to get the mastery over us. O struggler after mental, moral, spiritual liberty, if thou wouldst be free, thine only possible freedom is in Christ. If thou wouldst shake off evil habits or any other mental bondage, I shall prescribe no remedy to thee but this, to commit thyself to Christ the Liberator.

"The gates of brass before him burst,
The iron fetters yield."

Love him, and thou shalt hate sin. Trust him, and thou shalt no more trust thyself. Submit thyself to the sway of the incarnate God, and he will break the dragon's head within thee, and hurl Satan beneath thy feet. Nothing else can do it. Christ must have the glory of thy conquest of self. He can set thee free from sin's iron yoke. He never failed yet, and he never shall. I earnestly entreat any man who desires to break off his sins (and we must break them off or perish by them), to try this divine remedy, and see if it does not give him holy liberty. Ask the thousands who have already believed in Jesus, and their testimony will confirm my doctrine. Faith in the Lord Jesus is the end of bondage and the dawn of freedom.

The last part of this divine work is, *bringing them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.* This we will refer to those who are truly emancipated, and yet by reason of despond-

ency sit down in the dark dungeon. We have in our pastoral duties constantly to console persons who are free from their sins, having by divine grace got the mastery over them, but yet they are in sadness. The door is open, the bars are broken, but with strange obstinacy of despondency they remain in the cell of fear, in which there is no necessity for them to continue for a moment. They cannot believe that these good things are true to them. They forgiven? They could believe everybody else to be pardoned but themselves. *They* made the children of God? Nay, they could hope for their sisters; they have joy in knowing that their father is a child of God, but as to themselves—can such blessings really fall to the lot of such unworthy ones? We have talked with hundreds of such and tried to console them, but we have only learned our own unskilfulness in the art of consolation. They are rich in inventions for self-torture, ingenious in escaping comfort. But, ah! the blessed Master of our souls, whose business it has been since Adam fell to bind up broken hearts, is never foiled. When his eternal Spirit comes to anoint with the oil of joy, he soon gives beauty for ashes. The mournful sentinel of the night-watches must rejoice when the day breaketh and the Sun of righteousness shines forth.

Although I speak to you in very common-place language, yet the theme is rich. This one thought alone ought to make our hearts dance for joy, to think that the Christ of God undertakes to lift up desponding and despairing spirits into hope and joy once more. I know who will rejoice to hear this. It is yonder good woman, who these many years has been in spiritual bondage. It is yonder young man, who has carried a secret burden month after month. It is yonder aged man, who longs to find Christ ere he gathers up his feet in his dying bed, and who thinks that his hour of grace has passed. Man, it is not so. Christ is still mighty to save. Still doth the message run: "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Go, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Prisoners of hope, your liberator is near at hand. Trust him and be free. Though it seem a venturesome believing, yet venture on him. He cannot, will not reject you; he will proclaim a jubilee, and set each bondslave free.

See, then, how the great Redeemer blessed us: Jesus the Christ does all things well; he clears the understanding; he breaks the power of sinful habits; he removes the load of despondency; he doth it all. Christ Jesus, Mary's son and Jehovah's son man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet God over all, blessed for ever; he who died on Calvary, whose precious blood is the panacea for all human ills, he it is, and he only, who is the Liberator of our fallen race.

IV. WHAT IS THE DESIGN OF GOD IN ALL THIS?

This question is answered in the next verse to the text: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another." The great end of God in Christ was the manifestation of his own glorious attributes—a simple truth, but big with comfort, for should the sinner

who has been an atrocious offender against laws human and divine conceive himself to be an improper subject for the grace of God, I would take him by the hand, and lest despair drive him to further sin, I would put this truth clearly before him. Where is mercy most glorified? Is it not in passing by the greatest offenses? Thou hast great offenses; there is room in thee for mercy to be greatly displaced. Where is grace glorified? Is it not in conquering the most violent passions? Thou hast such; grace may therefore be glorified in thee. Why, great sinner, instead of not being a fit subject for grace, I will venture to say that thou art in all respects one of the most suitable. There is elbow-room in thee for grace to work. There is room in thine emptiness for God's fullness. There is a clear stage in thy sinfulness for God's superabounding grace. But you have been a ringleader in the devil's army. Yes, and how can God strike a more telling blow against the hosts of darkness than by capturing you? But you tell me that you are an enormous sinner. How will the Lord of love encourage other sinners to come better than by calling you? For it will be rumoured about among your fellow-sinners:-"Have you heard that such an one is saved?" I know they will jeer, but still, in their secret hearts, they will think it over, and they will say, "How is this?" and they will be led to enquire into the ways of God's grace. A brother told the church, a short time since, a little of his history, and it caused us all to rejoice in sovereign grace. He had lived in all manner of sin and iniquity; his profession had been for some years that of a public runner, and in that course of life he was brought into collision with the scum of society. He was practiced, also, in the pugilistic art, and that, we all know, is the very reverse of having an elevating tendency. But he came to the Tabernacle, and here Jesus met with him, and he rejoices now to teach to others the gospel which he once rejected. But what, think you has he been accustomed to do these three years? Some of our brethren preach in the streets, and he goes with them, and after they have told of what the grace of God can do, he humbly and yet boldly rises and says, "I am a living witness to what grace can do; I can declare to you what God's love has done for me." If the sermon which precedes his little speech has not interested the people, they are quite certain to be struck with his personal testimony, for in some localities many of the street folk know him, and as they look at him they say, "Why, that is old so-and-so. I knew him when he was this and that, and here he is converted;" and his witness-bearing works mightily among his old friends and acquaintances. I say, then, if now I speak to any other who has been a great offender, a drunkard, or what not, if my Master does but set you free and enlist you in his army, there will be such a shout go up in the hosts of Israel as shall make heaven ring, while the Philistines shall tremble, for their Goliath shall be slain, and a new champion raised up from his dead body to fight for the Lord of hosts. If the Lord saved men because of their merits, there would be no hope for great sinners, nor indeed for any one; but if he saves us for his own glory, that he may magnify his grace and his mercy among the sons of men, then none need despair. Up to the very gates of hell would I preach the gospel, and between the jaws of death would I proclaim it. God to glorify his grace sets

free the captives, then why should not the most hell-deserving sinner, whose heart is like hardened steel, yet become a monument of Christ's power to save? I remember one who used to say that if God would but have mercy on him he should never hear the last of it, and it may well be the resolve of all of us, that earth and heaven shall never hear the last of our praises if grace shall but save us. As one of our hymns puts it

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Yes, we will each sing loudest, each owing most, each desiring, therefore, to bend the lowest and to praise the most heartily, the grace which has set us free.

Time flies with us; days are rushing past; years are hastening away. How long shall it be ere Christ shall gain your hearts? How long shall ye hear of him, and continue to refuse his grace? How long, ye unconverted ones, will ye hug your chains and kiss your fetters? "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 42.

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